

(Washington, DC)— The Democratic Women's Working Group yesterday hosted a meeting with the Global Health Council and the lead author of a report released Monday at the United Nations on how the global economic crisis is negatively impacting the health of women, infants and children in developing and developed nations. The report by the Global Campaign for the Health Millennium Development Goals was titled, *Leading by Example, Protecting the Most Vulnerable During the Economic Crisis*.

Congresswoman Gwen Moore, D-Wisc., Rep. Lois Capps, D-Calif., and Rep. Lynn Woosley, D-Calif., of the Democratic Women's Working Group were present at the meeting. CEO of the Global Health Council, Jeffrey L. Sturchio chaired the meeting and introduced Tore Godals, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister of Norway on Global Health Issues. Godals discussed the report, which focuses on the effect of the economic crisis on women and children and answered questions from the members.

"I am hopeful that with the new Administration, we are going to try and catch up to the task of dealing with the problems of infant and maternal mortality," Rep. Moore said. "These issues represent just the tip of the iceberg on the status of women around the world. I am here to accept my assignments, and to be a contributor to solving these problems."

"I think there is a natural tendency for nations to only look inwards during the global recession, and I think it is our task to ensure that people appreciate that we are all in this together, and the United States cannot retreat into our own internal problems and ignore the rest of the world."

The briefing follows Monday's release of the report that was first unveiled at a luncheon at the UN June 15, hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Foreign Minister of Norway Jonas Gahr Støre.

In the report The Network of Global Leaders urge leaders to take measure to protect the vulnerable, especially women and children, from the economic downturn.

"The global economic crisis demonstrates how inter-dependent we have become as a global community. This is the time to honour our commitments and invest in our common future," say

the leaders in the signed overview of the report.

The global economic crisis has so far driven more than 50 million people into extreme poverty, particularly women and children. Lessons from previous crises have shown that setbacks for the poorest take a long time to put right, so the need for action is urgent.

Recent actions from governments, international agencies and civil society have started to show impact on the health of mothers and children. This has given hope for accelerating progress toward the Health Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 (aiming to reduce child mortality by two-thirds and maternal mortality by three-quarters by 2015). These are seen as the most neglected and impeded of the health goals. However, this progress is now threatened by the most severe global economic crisis since the 1930s, especially in low-income countries.

World Bank analysis suggests that the crisis will trap 53 million people in extreme poverty in the developing world in 2009. Some 200,000 - 400,000 more infants will die every year, more women will die while giving birth.

The Network of Global Leaders, including 12 leaders from developing and donor countries, are honoring their commitments in the report: All the developing countries are maintaining their health budgets, and some (Brazil, Chile, Indonesia, Tanzania) are continuing to increase them. The four donor countries are maintaining their commitments to Official Development Assistance (ODA) and increasing their commitments to health. In the United Kingdom, ODA as a percentage of GDP will grow. Norway will exceed its one percent target.

In developing countries, targeted action to help the most vulnerable through social protection programs are being rolled out: conditional cash transfer programs, economic stimulus packages for small businesses, food protection programs, and free public health services for the vulnerable creating increased demand for public services. The World Bank and WHO refer to lessons from previous crises in Asia showing that the impact of the crisis depends on how governments react to protect health of the poor and vulnerable.

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